United Nations A/69/PV.1

General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

1st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 16 September 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the President of the General Assembly

The President: I declare open the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: In accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Statement by the President

The President: Today I am pleased to address the General Assembly for the first time as President of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I am deeply humbled and honoured by the trust Member States have bestowed upon me and my country, Uganda. I am convinced that together we, as Member States, will achieve a lot over the next 12 months in advancing the core values and principles of the United Nations for the betterment of the world and its peoples.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my predecessor, His Excellency Mr. John Ashe, who presided over the just-concluded sixty-eighth session of the Assembly. Mr. Ashe worked tirelessly to promote the work of the General Assembly. On behalf of all Member States, I convey our gratitude to him for his dedicated service. I wish in particular to thank him for setting the stage with the conclusion of intergovernmental processes, whose outcomes will provide key inputs for our work at this session. He also handed over to me a compendium with major activities undertaken in the past year, as a foundation on which to build in order to address outstanding issues.

I also thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership, dedication and personal commitment to advancing the agenda of the Organization. I look forward to working closely with him, his team and the United Nations system as a whole.

The coming year will be a momentous time for the United Nations. We will commemorate the seventieth anniversary of its founding, the twentieth anniversary of the groundbreaking Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 years since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and 10 years since the 2005 World Summit.

It is evident that the sixty-ninth session will be very busy. In addition to dealing with the normal work of the Main Committees, we will be preoccupied with negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. The key inputs will be the outcomes of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, the recommendations from the Structured Dialogues on a Technology

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Facilitation Mechanism, as well as the forthcoming Secretary-General's synthesis report. We also have preparations for and negotiations on the outcome for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held in July 2015 in Addis Ababa, and the climate change negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

While we have a lot of hard work ahead of us, we also have a historic opportunity to formulate a post-2015 development agenda that is transformative, brings about tangible benefits, leads to improved livelihoods for all and contributes to achieving sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental dimensions.

It will also be our responsibility to ensure that adequate means are mobilized for implementing the agenda in terms of financing, technology development and transfer and capacity-building. That will require a strengthened global partnership for development and enhanced cooperation between and among Member States, the private sector, civil society and all other stakeholders. It will also require a fair trading regime and the promotion of domestic and foreign direct investment.

It is for that reason that I chose the theme for the general debate at the sixty-ninth session to be "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". As I address representatives today in this newly opened, magnificent Assembly Hall, I cannot help but think that we are here at the dawn of a new day. Let us approach the pivotal sixty-ninth session with a sense of urgency, hope and greater cooperation. Let us seize the moment with a firm belief that a better tomorrow is within our reach.

The General Assembly remains the pre-eminent forum for global debate and cooperation among Member States. Let us use this unique environment as intended — to harness opportunities and to find solutions to the challenges confronting humankind. We can collectively make a significant contribution this year towards changing the world we live in for the better, not only for ourselves but for generations to come.

As I emphasized in my acceptance speech (see A/68/PV.93) in June, we must strive to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda is truly transformative, with the eradication of poverty and hunger and the promotion of sustained and inclusive economic growth as its overarching objectives. As we agreed in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development outcome document (resolution 66/288), entitled "The future we want", it should be holistic, action-oriented and universally acceptable, while also paying due attention to regional and national realities.

To that end, it is my intention to convene three high-level thematic debates and one high-level event. The main objective of the debates and event is to provide an opportunity for Member States and all the relevant stakeholders to have in-depth deliberations on the selected topics, in an interactive and participatory manner, with a view to making contributions to the process of formulating the post-2015 development agenda. I wish to stress that the debates and events will not pre-empt or prejudge the outcome of the intergovernmental negotiations.

The first high-level thematic debate, to be scheduled in February 2015, will be on the means of implementation for the post-2015 development agenda. Achieving sustainable development will require the mobilization and effective use of finances and technology development and transfer, as well as capacity-building. It will entail increased investments in social sectors, infrastructure, rural development, climate financing and the protection of global commons, to name but a few areas. The debate will focus on how to mobilize the significant resources that will be needed to turn the aspirations of the post-2015 development agenda into reality.

The second high-level thematic debate, to be held in March 2015, will focus on advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda. As highlighted in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288), although progress on gender equality has been made in some areas, the potential of women to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development has not yet been fully realized. In that connection, the debate will provide an opportunity to focus on measures that must be taken to advance gender equality and women's economic and political empowerment at all levels, as well as the importance of education in those endeavours.

The third high-level thematic debate, to be held in April or May 2015, will address the peaceful settlement of disputes and the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional

and subregional organizations. Over time, we have seen numerous examples of successful cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, particularly across my home continent, Africa. As I have stated before, such cooperation has yet to reach its full potential and must be substantially strengthened.

I also intend to convene, in June 2015, a high-level event on combating climate change, which is one of the defining global challenges of our time. To preserve planet Earth for ourselves and succeeding generations, the international community has an obligation to address the effects of climate change, which threaten humankind's very existence. It is important that, at this session, we give momentum and added impetus to efforts to reach a global agreement in 2015 under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In due course, I will provide details, including the specific dates and format, as well as the background and concept notes on each of the high-level thematic debates and events.

One of the priorities that I highlighted for this session is the continuing focus on the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council. While some progress towards making the General Assembly more effective and efficient has been made, we need to do more. In that regard, I have requested the respective Chairpersons of the Committees to pay greater attention to that matter. The need to reform the Security Council is urgent, as reflected in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1). We need to find a way of making progress on the intergovernmental negotiation process, and I call upon Member States to redouble their efforts at this session.

As we open the sixty-ninth session, the international community faces an unprecedented array of weighty challenges. The list is as lengthy as it is daunting. It includes poverty and hunger, persistent unemployment, violent armed conflicts, faltering education systems, climate change and rising sea levels, and inadequate infrastructure, to mention a few.

In recent months, we have seen health systems overwhelmed in the face of new and dire threats, such as the Ebola virus, while new challenges to peace and security have emerged with alarming frequency, including a rise in polarization, extremism and terrorist activities.

To say that we are living in tumultuous times would seem an understatement. Yet, while the outlook may seem grim and the challenges daunting, we must not allow ourselves to be gripped by fear or despair. Together, with dedication, single-mindedness of purpose and compromise, we can achieve great things. As Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, "Everything that is done in the world is done by hope."

Let us take our hope and, as inspiration, our belief in a better future and tackle such formidable challenges with a sense of resolve and resilience over the next 12 months. Now more than ever before, the world needs harmony, unity, optimism and hope and all our nations and peoples united in peace and prosperity.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: It is a great honour to join all present for the official opening of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. Here in New York, autumn is in the air, but at United Nations Headquarters it feels like spring. We meet in the newly renovated General Assembly Hall to resolve anew our work to advance the values, principles and aspirations of the Charter of the United Nations. Whether autumn or spring, we come together to make this a season of progress.

I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa once again as he takes up his duties as President at this important session. I have no doubt that, with his experience, wisdom and distinguished service as Foreign Minister of Uganda, he will lead this crucially important session of the General Assembly to great success. I very much look forward to working closely with him throughout the coming year, as we have already worked together. I also want to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. John Ashe for his stewardship over the past tumultuous 12 months as President of the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

I am convinced that the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly could be the most consequential in a generation and for a generation. The coming year must be a time for action and for results. We have important tests before us and high expectations across the range of peace, development and human rights challenges. We begin in earnest this month with vital high-level meetings and gatherings to stem the existential threat of climate change, to advance the rights and opportunities of the world's indigenous peoples, to rally together to

improve the health of women and girls, to take on Ebola and to address the many peace and security challenges that now plague our world.

There is plenty of reason to be concerned about the state of the world, but also plenty of reason for hope. That hope starts here in this one-of-a-kind and wondrous Hall, where the world unites to solve challenges and to improve the lives of those who sent us here — "we the peoples". Let us resolve to act together to accelerate progress as the Millennium Development Goals enter their final stretch. Let us join forces to establish a set of sustainable development goals and a development agenda that can wipe out extreme poverty over the next 15 years. Let us commit to take on the climate change challenge and leave a cleaner and greener planet for posterity. Let us spare no effort to place human rights up front and to promote peace and security everywhere for everyone.

Our eyes must be open to the world and all its challenges. We see a rising tide of intolerance — of societies closing in on themselves — of groups eager to exploit differences and wage campaigns of hate.

The General Assembly stands as the ultimate rebuke to that distorted and venomous view of the world. Here we stand — nations united — to demonstrate that in our interconnected, ever-smaller interdependent world, the best way to solve problems is by working together in a more determined way than ever before.

By being here, you have shown your commitment to that twenty-first-century truth and command. Now let us prove it through principled and effective action. I am grateful for your leadership and commitment.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Item 135 of the provisional agenda

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/69/374)

The President: I would like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/69/374. It contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly, in which he informs the Assembly that five Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years".

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/69/374?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the sixty-ninth session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: Brazil, China, Bangladesh, Denmark, Jamaica, Namibia, Senegal, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

May I take it that the States that I have just mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Organization of work of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly

Letter from the Chair of the Committee on Conferences (A/69/370)

The President: The Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/69/370, which contains a letter dated 2 September 2014 from the Chair of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly. Members are aware that, pursuant to section 1, paragraph 7 of Assembly resolution 40/243, of 18 December 1985, no subsidiary

organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during the main part of a regular session of the Assembly, unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

On the strict understanding that meetings would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services, authorization is thus sought for the following subsidiary organs: the Preparatory Committee for the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III); the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for the Ten-Year Review Conference on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action; the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations, the Specialized Agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency; the Board of Auditors; the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; the Disarmament Commission; the Independent Audit Advisory Committee; the Executive Board of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; and the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize these subsidiary organs of the Assembly to meet during the main part of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.